

continues its brutality against the Syrian people, and so we continue to help Syrians stand up to Asad and deal with the humanitarian crisis and push back against extremists. In Iraq, where ISIL's attacks on civilians and destruction of religious sites seek to inflame sectarian tensions, we continue to call for a new Government that can unite Iraqis and show all communities in Iraq that they can advance their aspirations through the political process.

Separately, the pictures we are seeing in Gaza and Israel are heart wrenching. People here in the United States care deeply about what's happening there, and I know there are strong views, as well as differences, about how we should move forward, which is part of American democracy. We welcome that debate. That makes us stronger.

Our goal has been and continues to be peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. Now, I will say very clearly: No country can accept rockets fired indiscriminately at citizens. And so we've been very clear that Israel has the right to defend itself against what I consider to be inexcusable attacks from Hamas. At the same time, on top of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza that we've worked long and hard to alleviate, the death and injury of Palestinian civilians is a tragedy, which is why we've emphasized the need to protect civilians, regardless of who they are or where they live.

I believe further escalation benefits no one, least of all the Israeli and the Palestinian people. So we're going to continue doing everything we can to facilitate a return to the 2012 cease-fire. We are encouraged that Egypt has made a proposal to accomplish this goal, which we hope can restore the calm that we've been seeking. More broadly, however, the situation

in Gaza reminds us again that the status quo is unsustainable and that the only path to true security is a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, where differences are resolved peacefully and in ways that respect the dignity of all people.

Here at home, even as we're vigilant in ensuring our security, we have to continue to remain true to our highest ideals. In the United States of America, there is no place for false divisions between races and religions. We are all Americans, equal in rights and dignity, and no one should ever be targeted or disparaged because of their faith. And that too is what makes us stronger.

So tonight, as we gather to celebrate Ramadan, let's renew our obligations to one another. Like Kelly and Muhammed and Aala, let's help lift up our neighbors so more people share in the American Dream. Let's commit ourselves—as nations and as individuals—to pursue the peace we seek in our world. And let's remember whatever our faith, we are servants of God, summoned to care for our brothers and sisters. So God bless you all, God bless America, and may you and your families have a blessed Ramadan.

That went a little longer than I expected, but please get back to the soup, which I understand is quite good. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:03 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Muhammed Chaudhry, president and chief executive officer, Silicon Valley Education Foundation; Aala Mohamed, consultant and coordinator, Al-Mustakbal; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center in McLean, Virginia *July 15, 2014*

Hello, everybody! Everybody, have a seat, have a seat, have a seat. Good afternoon. Thank you, Secretary Foxx, for that introduction.

I just got a tour of a lab where automakers and Government researchers team up to create new technologies that help cars communicate with the world around them and with each

other. They can tell you if an oncoming vehicle is about to run a red light or if a car is coming around a blind corner or if a detour would help you save some time and gas. And I got to test all this in a simulator. It was sort of like “Knight Rider.” [Laughter] I have to say, though, it was a little disorienting. I haven’t driven in about 6 years. And I’m going down the highway, and I think I had a little bit of a lead foot. I was starting to hit 90. [Laughter] And then, like, right next to me, the press pool is standing there, and they’re kind of traveling with me at 90 miles an hour, and it got me a little queasy. [Laughter] But I’ve recovered.

Now, as the father of a daughter who just turned 16, any new technology that makes driving safer is important to me. And new technology that makes driving smarter is good for the economy. One study shows that Americans spend 5.5 billion hours stuck in traffic each year, which costs us \$120 billion in wasted time and gas. That’s 800 bucks per commuter. Then you’ve got outdated roads and bridges that mean businesses pay an extra \$27 billion in freight costs, which are then passed on to consumers. So, all told, transportation eats up more of the typical family’s household budget than anything except the rent or a mortgage, which means that the cutting-edge research that all of you are doing here helps save lives and save money and leads to new jobs and new technologies and new industries. And that’s why America has to invest more in the kind of job-creating research and development that you’re doing right here at the Highway Research Center.

Now, I’m also here today to talk about why America has got to invest more in rebuilding the infrastructure that these cars will drive on, because it will create better jobs and better position America for the future.

We know that in a 21st-century economy businesses will set up shop wherever they find the best roads and bridges and the fastest rail and Internet, the smartest airports, the smartest power grids. First-class infrastructure attracts first-class jobs. And right now our investments in transportation are lagging the rest of the world.

If Washington were working the way it’s supposed to, Congress would be fixing that. We’d be investing in the things that help America bring more good jobs to our shores. Instead, here’s what’s going on in Washington. There’s something called the highway trust fund; I suspect this crew is familiar with it. It’s—it helps States support transportation projects. If Congress fails to fund it, it runs out of money. That could put nearly 700,000 jobs at risk, including more than 17,000 right here in Virginia. More than 100,000 active projects across the country—projects where workers as we speak are paving roads and rebuilding bridges and modernizing our transit systems—those projects would be slowed or stopped. And some States have already had to put some projects on hold because they don’t trust Congress to get its act together. So remember that the next time you see a job site sitting idle.

Now, the good news is, there are bipartisan bills in both the House and the Senate that would help with a short-term fix. And I support that. At the very least, Congress should be keeping people on the job who are already there right now. But all this does is set us up for the same crisis a few months from now.

So Congress shouldn’t pat itself on the back for averting disaster for a few months, kicking the can down the road for a few months, careening from crisis to crisis when it comes to something as basic as our infrastructure. Instead of barely paying our bills in the present, we should be investing in the future. We should have a plan for how we’re going to make sure that our roads, our bridges, our airports, our power grid, our water systems—how all those things are going to be funded, and do it in a responsible way so that people can start planning. That also means we can save more money, because we’re not doing it in stopgap measures.

So that’s why earlier this year, I put forward a plan to rebuild our transportation infrastructure in a more responsible way. It would support millions of jobs. It would give cities and States and private investors the certainty they need to plan ahead and hire more workers. It would help small businesses ship their goods

faster. It would help parents get home to their kids faster. It would mean less wear and tear on your car. It would mean less money on gas. It would save people money. It would support cutting-edge research like the work that you're doing here, which could end up cutting back on the number of traffic fatalities.

And my plan would not add to what is already a rapidly shrinking deficit. We've cut our deficit, by the way, by more than half since I came into office. And we wouldn't be adding to the deficit, because we'd pay for this transportation project in part by closing tax loopholes for companies that ship jobs overseas and avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

So far, House Republicans have refused to act on this idea, and they haven't presented their own idea. And I think that's wrong. We shouldn't be protecting tax loopholes for a few companies that shift massive profits overseas, we should be creating jobs rebuilding the roads and bridges that help every business right here in the United States. That is a question of priorities. And what I keep hearing from folks all across the country is that if Congress would just shift its priorities a little closer to working Americans' priorities, we could help a lot of families right now.

This is not an abstract issue. And it shouldn't be even a partisan issue. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, everybody uses our roads. After this last winter, you've got potholes everywhere wrecking your car. I mean, how many here—how many people here have had the experience of you're driving along and suddenly your car is wrecked? And you pay for that out of pocket. When you are in traffic congestion—because of poor planning and bad infrastructure—when you could be at home reading to your kid or catching their ballgame, that's a cost to you. Everybody cares about that. It doesn't matter what your political persuasion is.

And after the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, our businesses have created nearly 10 million new jobs over the past 52 months. The unemployment rate is at its lowest point since September of 2008. We've made huge strides in energy independence.

For the first time in more than a decade, business leaders around the world are saying the best place to invest isn't China, the best place to invest is the United States of America. But you've still got a lot of middle class families all across the country who are working harder than ever just to get ahead. They need a break. They need some help. And having better roads and less delays, that helps.

And meanwhile, Republicans in Congress keep blocking or voting down some of the ideas that would have the biggest impact on middle class families and working families. Not just creating more new construction jobs, they've said no to raising the minimum wage, to equal pay, to fixing our broken immigration system.

Now, I want to work with everybody, Republicans and Democrats, to move this country forward. But I can't just stand by while politics threatens all the hard work of millions of Americans because we've just got gridlock in Washington. So what I've tried to do is take a range of actions this year to help working Americans with my own legal authorities, from speeding up big infrastructure projects to raising wages. I'm waiting for Congress to act, but in the meantime, I've got to go ahead and do what I can do.

And in response, their plan so far has not been to join me and say, all right, Mr. President, you're right, we do need to rebuild our roads, we do need to spruce up our airports. Instead, their big idea has been to sue me. That's what they're spending time on, a political stunt that wastes America's time and taxpayer dollars.

Keep in mind, it's your money that they're going to be spending on these ridiculous pursuits instead of just getting some work done. And I'm not interested in playing political games. I'm interested in making sure the economy grows and we're creating more jobs and we're helping more middle class families get ahead.

We need to invest in America's infrastructure. You guys are helping to show us how to do it in a really smart way. We need to invest in American innovation and research and development. We

need to invest in American manufacturing. We should be training more of our workers for new and better jobs. We should be preparing every child for a world-class education. We should be making sure that hard work pays off with higher wages and greater workplace flexibility and health care and childcare. All these things would make a difference in people's day-to-day lives.

And the point is, we could do so much more if we just rallied around a sense of economic patriotism that says, you know what, the parties compete, but every once in a while, we've got to actually do some work instead of worrying about elections or trying to score points on cable TV. And we can start by investing in our country.

Because historically—it was Eisenhower who built the Interstate Highway System, working with Democrats and Republicans—this isn't a partisan issue. And when we treat some basic investments as something that we do as Americans, when we rise or fall together as one Nation and as one people, things work, and nobody can beat us. And that's the spirit that all of you show here. That's what I'm going to keep on fighting for every single day.

So I'm proud of you. I want you to keep on doing what you're doing. We're going to try to

make sure Congress actually does as good of a job at what they're supposed to be doing as you guys are doing on yours. If we do, then you're going to have some parents who are getting home a little earlier. You're going to have folks who aren't going to have to go to the body shop quite as often. You're going to be seeing millions of people across the country saving money at the pump. We're going to see airline delays reduced, so when you plan that Thanksgiving trip, you're not spending the whole time in the airport. All that can make a huge difference.

But the American people have to demand that folks in Washington do their job. Do something: That's my big motto for Congress right now. Just do something. And if they don't like the transportation plan that I put forward, at least come up with your own plan. And then we can compromise. But don't just sit there and do nothing. We don't have time. America is on the move.

And part of it's on the move thanks to all of you. I really appreciate it. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor

July 15, 2014

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor de-

clared in Executive Order 13348 of July 22, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond July 22, 2014.

Although Liberia has made significant advances to promote democracy, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the actions and policies of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons, in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources and their removal from Liberia and secreting of Liberian funds and property, still challenge Liberia's efforts to strengthen its democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institu-